

CHECKLIST FOR PREVENTING OFFICE-RELATED WORKPLACE INJURIES

Sitting at your workstation in the office all day can result in common overuse and repetitive occupational injuries that can lead to back strain, carpal tunnel syndrome, vision or hearing problems (NIOSH, Health and Safety Manual, 2001). The following checklist will assist you in identifying risk factors and providing possible solutions as a learning tool for preventing office-related workplace injuries.

Things To Look For	Possible Solutions	
Prolonged hunched or elevated shoulder while holding the phone	Telephone headset Speakerphone	
Elbows splayed out (shoulder abduction)	Bring chair armrests in closer Awareness and habit training	Lower worksurface Lower chair armrests
Raised or tensed shoulders	Lower chair armrests Raise chair (keep feet in contact with floor)	Habit or tension training Lower worksurface or keyboard
Twisting the head to the side	Bring viewed item closer to centerline of view	
Elbow flexed for long periods using the telephone	Telephone headset Speakerphone	
Elbow or forearm resting for long periods on hard or sharp worksurface, chair armrests	Telephone headset Habit training	Pad or round surfaces, corners, and armrests Replace armrests
Wrists bent to the sides when using side keys	Keyboard with more accessible keys or split keyboard design	Habit training
Wrists bent back (extended) or forward (flexed) for prolonged periods	Habit training Palm rest Lower, raise, or change slope of the keyboard	
Wrists or palms resting for long periods on hard or sharp keyboard or worksurfaces	Habit training Palm rest Padded or rounded surfaces, corners	
Hands held actively over the keyboard during keying pauses	Habit training Palm or forearm rest	
Rapid, sustained, or prolonged keying	Aggressive break schedule Reduce overtime	Greater work variety
Forceful keying, key pounding	Habit training Light-touch keyboard	
Significant amounts of hand stapling, punching, lifting, opening mail, or other forceful exertions, especially combined with awkward postures	Bring heavy loads close to the body, at a medium height Substitute sliding (worksurface) or wheeling (floor) Sharpen letter openers	Mechanical aids, such as electric stapler or punch Reduce size of lifted loads
Prolonged mouse use	Arm support, including small table Mouse close to body (extended keyboard tray) Learn keystroke substitutes for menus	Greater work variety Aggressive break schedule Alternate hands Alternative pointing devices
Prolonged sitting, especially in only one posture	Move phone and printer to the other side of the office to force standing, or suggest standing when on phone Check chair fit Monitor in-out mechanism Sit-stand worksurface	Greater work variety Aggressive break schedule Chair that supports posture change, through movement, size, or easy adjustability Habit training
Lumbar back area not supported	Lumbar cushion Backrest height and tilt Check chair fit, especially backrest/lumbar height	

Things To Look For	Possible Solutions	
Feet dangling, not well supported, or a posture which seems to put pressure on the backs of the thighs	Lower Chair Lower worksurface Habit training Foot rest (last resort)	
Chair backrest not used for long periods	Check leg room Check monitor distance and character height Habit training	Check chair fit, especially seat pan depth and height
Twisted torso	U-shaped worksurface layout Swivel chair	Rearrange work Provide more knee space
Frequent or prolonged leaning or reaching	Bring mouse and keyboard closer to body	Rearrange work Mouse pad, palm or forearm rest
Working with one or both arms "reaching" toward a mouse or keyboard	Bring keyboard closer to body Mouse pad, palm or forearm rest Bring mouse closer to keyboard	
Light sources that can be seen by the worker	Lower other viewed objects to lower field of view	Cover or shield light sources Rearrange work arena
Reflected glare on the screen	Move monitor so light enter from side angle, not back Do NOT tip monitor down Lower light levels Move light sources	Shield light sources Shade screen Glare screen
Too much contrast between screen and surroundings or document; worker feels relief when bright areas are shielded	Block offending light sources Change screen polarity to black on white	Lower ambient light levels Turn off, reposition, or dim task lights
Very bright ambient lighting (above 500 lux or 50 fc) or shadowed areas caused by over-illumination	Lower ambient light levels to 200-500 lux (20-50 fc) Use task lights	
Monitor closer than approximately 65 cm (25")	Push monitor back (enlarge font size) Habit training for reclining	
Different viewed objects (screen, documents) at different distances from the eyes	Computer glasses Bring keyboard forward, possibly with a keyboard tray	Use document stand or otherwise equalize distances to within about 10 cm (4") if rapid viewing changes are required
Screen or documents not oriented perpendicular to the line of sight (tipped back slightly is even better)	Change monitor, document stand angle	
Prolonged near focusing throughout the day with few far-focusing opportunities	Rearrange space to provide view Introduce glazing	Move monitor back as far as possible Habit training
Monitor image dim, fuzzy, flickery, small, or otherwise difficult to read	Upgrade monitor Use software to enlarge image	
Shiny, low-contrast, or small-print documents	Improve lighting on documents if documents cannot be changed	
Forward head posture (peering) or squinting	Check for monitor image quality problems, character height or monitor distance Suggest consultation with vision specialist	Lower monitor Tilt monitor back
Eyestrain complaints	Suggest consultation with vision specialist	Check all aspects of visual environment
Neck extended backwards, head tilted back, even slightly	Remove tilt-swivel base from monitor (leave ventilation space)	Remove CPU from under monitor Check for bifocals and suggest full-frame "computer glasses" prescription
Neck severely flexed (downward)	Adjust posture Habit retraining Check glasses for proper prescription	Tilt face of monitor back Tilt document - do not lay flat on worksurface Raise document or monitor to a comfortable height

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